



THOMAS J. VILSACK
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SALLY J. PEDERSON
LT. GOVERNOR

August 29, 2005

The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW,
Washington, DC 20250-3355

Dear Secretary Johanns:

Thank you for coming back home to host a Farm Bill Forum at our Iowa State Fair on August 11, 2005. I appreciated the opportunity to make brief comments at the Forum. I summarize them here, and will look forward to offering additional comments in the future. At the Forum, I laid out three suggestions for your consideration, as follows:

First, all of us are concerned about the survival of family farms and small producers. In a day and age where we are seeing a consolidation of purchasing by large chain and grocery stores that exert pressure on processors, it may be appropriate and necessary for producers to find a way to align together so their market power is as strong as these large purchasers. I would appreciate an opportunity for such alliances to take place and that there be protections against any kind of retaliation as farmers group together in a cooperative venture to ensure that they get fair and decent prices for what they produce. Also, I would hope that contracts are as transparent as possible so everyone knows the rules of the game and so those rules cannot change in the middle of the game.

Second, my hope is that the Farm Bill of 2007 continues the progress we've seen in Iowa in encouraging buffer strip and wetland restoration. As you said during your news conference in Des Moines on August 11, 2005, there is no better steward of the land than those who farm the land. I believe we should treat conservation as if it were a commodity - and support it as such. It will help farmers and appropriately reward them for their stewardship. Appropriate conservation practices and policies will also help the country in trade negotiations, and it will also obviously be great for the environment.

Last, and certainly not least, as you face budget pressures and there are calls in Congress for limitations on payments to farmers, my hope is that, as those limitations are imposed, any money saved will be preserved for rural development. Iowa is a state that



has approximately 70 percent access to broadband Internet and our goal is to get to 100 percent. The Farm Bill and rural development components of that Farm Bill are critical to an expansion of that technology which will in turn create more economic opportunity for our smaller communities.

Iowa, the state that is number one in corn and beans and hogs, the state that's number one in egg production, the state that's number one in economic activity, number one in buffer strips and wetlands has a great interest in the Farm Bill. I appreciate your coming to Iowa, listening to the concerns of Iowans and to take them into consideration. I look forward to working with you and Congress as you develop the 2007 Farm Bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Vilsack", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Governor

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